CHAPTER - II

AFRICAN CULTURE

European countries have influenced Africa in their religions, culture, style of living, business transaction, language and the life of the Natives because of their long acquaintances. Because of the weaknesses of the natives or the pretext of modernization and westernization, the colonial countries often yielded to their influences with totally unhappy results. The chief motive of the Europeans in setting up the colonies was economic\(^1\). In order to find raw materials for industries and to dump the export surplus new territories and markets had to be established.

The colonialism with its evils of treachery led to bribery, massacre and enslavement; colonialism also made changes in political, cultural, educational, philosophical and racial aspects. This was a painful process for the natives to tolerate with. The British Education gave importance to the head and ignored the heart. It resulted ultimately in the dehumanization and slavery. Colour consciousness was another aspect of colonial problems. In India and Africa the natives developed a fascination for the white-skinned people who exercised power over them. Influenced by two or more countries the protagonists faced
the dilemma of identity which finds an expression as in Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer At Ease*. English language dominated and its popularity grew at the cost of native languages which remained stunted and undeveloped.

In Africa, a move against colonialism was made in 1930’s when the Black students in Paris started a movement called ‘Negritude’ to reassert their identity all over the world. They struggled for independence. At last colonies in Africa gained independence. But the new rulers and politicians became as corrupt and greedy as the colonizers had been. African people felt the existence of colonial enemy within themselves. These feelings of disillusionment are reflected in the novels of other African writers like, T.M. Aluko, Ngugi Wa Thion O, Ayik Kneio Armah and Wole Soyinka.

The major ethnic groups that lived in Nigeria were, Ibo, Hausa and Yoruba. They were not organized political entities in pre-colonial period. But in the post-colonial period, common language and way of life made each of these a unit of solidarity in political and economic life in Nigeria:

“Africa is noted for its diversity of cultures and ethnic groups…. speaking nearly 800 different languages…. a sudden upsurge of political and national awareness occurred and the “wind of change” swept across the entire continent…. nearly 40 independent nations have emerged”\(^2\).
The South African native National Congress which was formed in 1912-1913 came to be known as ANC. ANC members led by the lawyer Nelson Mandela began to oppose the government chiefly through Civil Disobedience. Nelson Mandela became the first Commander in-chief in 1964… Mandela succeeded as ANC President in 1991.

In colonial settlements there was an increasing hold of Whites upon the Blacks. This may be an explanation of why the African remained largely emotional in his approach to the challenges of the intellect\(^3\). He continues to observe as follows:

“It may be because he (African) finds that even though he adopts new values of the industrial culture represented and promoted by the white, his status in society would still remain inferior under the white stipulation, in spite of the proclaimed parity under the new dispensation\(^4\). Achebe's successful use of the irony involves disillusion as all those seeking parity within white structures. Regarding the status of the Negroes, he continues to say, “Negroes have never been allowed to catch the full spirit of the western civilization, that they lived somehow in it but not of it“\(^5\).

As Europeans became increasingly involved in African economic affairs mainly through trade, they gained more and more political control over the parts
of the continent. Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Portugal and Spain had strengthened their hold in perceptive parts of Africa, British – ruled Nigeria. The Christian missionaries challenged the religious and social traditions that had long been part of the African life. Many Africans looked upon the colonial rule as humiliating experience.

The African Independence Movement started after the World War II (1939-45). Blacks were not taken into the government services by the whites especially in the upper stratum. The whites developed a rigid system of racial separation called “Apartheid”. Gradually the natives were given the right to vote. Young natives led by Nelson Mandela began to resist the government chiefly through disobedience. Civil War broke out in 1964. Mandela and Walter Sisulu were sentenced to life. In 1994 elections were held and Mandela was elected President.

On 18th November 1993 following the military rule all elected heads of the states were removed. Power was vested in Federal Executive Council (F.E.C). The head of the states was Commander in Chief of Military. On 21st November 1979 as per the Constitution, Nigeria became an Independent state in 1960 and a Republic within the Commonwealth in October 1983.

“Umofia is a dispersed town composed of nine villages, commonality of citizens, particularly men of substance, who gave
decisions which were revered… All men are farmers, wealth is counted in Yams and wives. The Agricultural products are Cocoa, Palm oil, Palm kernel, Cotton, rubber, peanuts and skins, timber and crude oil”\(^6\).

A substantial international labour migration has developed, particularly of Africans from Central Africa to the mines and factories of Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Apart from Arabic, the most widely spoken languages are Swahin and Hausa.

According to Wilfred Cartery, “The Whites who came from Europe to Africa filled the different positions in the colonial societies. They were Governors, administrators, ministers of God, merchants, or land owners… The natives could not escape brutality or find relief from exploitation. The material exploitation of the colonial administration was no harsher than the spiritual domination exercised by the missionaries”\(^7\). They were particular only in curbing the black’s independence.

“Christian missionaries came to Africa not to sow the mustard seed of the kingdom of God in the African cultural soil, but rather to sow the ‘fire seed’ which would burn up the grasses of African cultures. And in order to ensure that this unholy act against cultures was accomplished the agents of Christianity, incarnated in birds of prey, the eagles, invaded the habitat of the “sunbird” and
the “Twin Gods” who constituted the bed rock of these cultures. The whites tried to dominate in all ways on the daily routine of the Nigerians and succeeded in their mission of suppressing them.

As for telling the story, Achebe concedes that the English language will be able to carry his African experience. It will have to be a different English still in its full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings. Africa, like India had different languages and innumerable dialects which shaped different kinds of English all of which are necessary to articulate a rich variety of experiences, attitudes and states of mind.

The cultures of the stone age were transformed to a greater extent by the technological advancements, by new ideas and by social forces. The most important of these innovations involved the use of metal tools and weapons, the domestications of plants and animals, the extension and organization of trade and increased complexity of social structure particularly the development of chieftaincy and age grading.

Yorube were the first to adapt to the new environments. Bantu speaking people in Nigeria and Cameroons’ area came spreading. They were influenced by Meroe and Axum. The Portuguese’s arrival in Indian Ocean in 1497 had a destructive effect on the coastal side. Within twenty years, the Europeans had destroyed the power of the Arabs and the trade was diverted to Europe.
Most of the Europeans were attracted to Africa in the 16th and 17th centuries and settled at trade posts in West Africa. They were content to remain on the coast and near the forts that protected them while slaves, gold and ivory were brought in by coastal tribes. African Association with its leader M. Mungo Park went interior and discovered that Niger flowed eastward in 1796; Tripoli discovered lake Chad in 1822.

Hugh Clappertion explored the northern Nigeria and visited Kano – later extended towards Logos. Richard L. Lander, solved the riddle of Niger and discovered the mouth of delta of river Niger which was long known to the white as Oil Rivers. In 1820, Alexander Gardan Laing explored West Africa and reached the city of Timbuktu. The most significant explorations made in Nigerian part of Africa were those of Herinrich Barth, a German who started from Tripoli for the interior in 1850 as a member of the British Expedition, under the command of James Richardson. Two other Germans, Friedrich Gerhard Rohlfs and Gustav Nachtigal explored from Tripoli and crossed areas of Lagos and Lake Chad. French and Italians also made several explorations.

Britain came to control most of the territories which were under European control. They had established their supremacy in Lagos in Nigeria, in Sievra Leone Gambia River area, Gold Coast now known as Ghana and Cape colony.
The French constructed Suez Canal for Navigation and thus colonial rule was introduced gradually.

The period from 1914 to 1939 saw the full flower and beginning of the decline of the colonial system in Africa. In the case of Britain the theory of “indirect rule” was the basis of administration. British officers ruled through the traditional chiefs seeking to preserve as far as possible power and prestige of the chief while adopting the customary methods of rule to meet the needs of the modern society. By 1939, their strategy of ‘indirect rule’ was not satisfactory. The chiefs were not always capable of being adopted to modern ways and the system left no place for the young educated men to share in tribal administration. Gradually after 1945, elected local councils were substituted for the native authorities or the chiefs and their council and the new councils were to form the testing place for the organization of National political parties.

The second World War had a lot of effects on all the colonies. For the first time, the myth of invincibility was destroyed. The African European administration was disorganized and weakened by the shortages of personnel. Africans were given new and greater responsibilities. In 1945, after African representation and participation in Government, central legislatures got introduced in British and French colonies. Elections to these legislatures promoted the formation of early political groups. African voters were given for
the first time after 1946, opportunity to express a political choice at both National and village level. The stage was set for the Nationalist drive of the next decade.

The Nigerians’ new constitutional provisions which were largely in accordance with the recommendations of National Constitutional Conference included the adoption of a multi-party system. This made provision for any party with a minimum of ten seats in the National Assembly for getting the proportional representation in the Federal Executive Council, the division of the country into a number of regions and a rotation of principal executive and legislature offices between their regions for a period of thirty years and establishment of National Judicial Council and Constitutional court. The government subsequently created a number of committees as part of the transitional programme, including the National Election Commission of Nigeria which divided the country into seven regions. Nigeria is a federation of 36 states comprising 774 Local Government areas.

Africa has about 30,27,000 sq.kms. The density of population is 25 people per kilometre. The chief mountain Ranges are Ahaggar, Atlas, Drakesberg, Ruwenzor and Tibesti. Chief rivers which flow in Africa are Congo (Zaire), Leimpopo, Niger, Oronge and Zambezi. Chief lakes are Albert, Chad, Ngasa, Tanganyika, Turkana and Victoria. Large deserts are Kalahari, Namib
and Sahara and Sahara is the largest desert in the world. More than 80% of the population live in South of Sahara. About two thirds of the Africans live in rural villages. The rest live in cities and towns.

The people of Africa have rich and varied culture and ancestry. There are more than 800 ethnic groups of dark skinned Africans frequently called Blacks or Black Africans. Each group consists of people who have in common their history, religion, artistic traditions and way of life. Blacks account for about 75% of Africa’s population. Africans include Arabs, Berbers, Europeans and Asians. Blacks were the original inhabitants probably of the continent. There are about 80 million of Arabs and most of them live in Northern Sudan, Egypt and Mediterranean coast. Berbers are about 20 million in population and they live in Algeria and Morocco. They are from pre-historic times. Europeans are mostly descendants of the French, Dutch and British. Asians numbering around 2.50 million live in Southern and Eastern Africa.

In traditional African society an individual is a part of corporate life of community. His individualism, if any, is looked down upon by the others. In the African fictional world an individual has to bow down to the will of his community. Umuofia in Achebe’s Things Fall Apart has an identity of its own and it is united by an Ibo consciousness. The Negro is not disposed to rebel because he has largely been a child of the wild that demands his passive
submission rather than compel him to accept the dictates of the elements as a challenge. He is, therefore, largely impulsive. Due to foreign rule there emerged social changes in Nigeria and Kenya.

Nigeria is a member of the African Development Bank of the Economic Community of West African States which aims to promote trade and cooperation in West Africa and of the Organization of the Petroleum exporting countries. Nigeria achieved high levels of Economic growth in the 1970s. In early 1997, ethnic unrest in the town of Warri severely disrupted Petroleum mining operations in the region; by April the ensuing fuel shortage has resulted in the suspension of economic activity in most parts of the country. In the long term, political instability continued to represent a severe impediment to Economic growth.

Education is partly the responsibility of the State Governments, although the federal government has played an increasingly important role since 1970. Primary education begins at six years of age and lasts for six years. Secondary education begins at 12 years of age and lasts for further six years, comprising two three-year cycles. Education to Junior secondary level (from six to 15 years of age) is free and compulsory.

According to Klapp, the human society has been divided into three categories namely Traditional, Transitional and Technologically Advanced. A
traditional society is a closely knit tribal village and faces very few problems. Transitional society makes the population mobile and urban-oriented. They move to cities in search of job opportunities and give “psychological mobility” to the people but weaken group solidarity. They face problems of redefining their identity. Technology “has a mystique of its own” of science, chrome and efficiency. This lack of rituals in the technologically advanced society has deprived in individual of message of reassurance. He seeks reassurance in finding a profession, career or by forming a group activity which helps him participate in collective search for identity.

An African is aware of the wisdom of his ancient saying “That the sun will shine on those who stand before it, shines on those who kneel under them”. The African has fallen and keeps falling, instead of standing and rising. He has fallen to the extent that he has shut himself out of the world around him. This fact is lamented over by Okankwo’s uncle when he goes to seek refuge with him. “You think you are the greatest sufferer in the world. Do you know that men are sometimes banished for life? Do you know that men sometimes lose all their yams and even their children?”

The helplessness, backwardness and consequent fall of the Africans may be due to the self-centredness he has cultivated and further a trait of an agricultural set-up. An African is pursuing the mirage of his dislocated
happiness. He is desperately running across vast expanses of his native black freedom towards an illusory white.

The Ibo (Igbo) is the largest ethnic group in Nigeria with a population of 5,000,000. Their language Igbo, is in the Kepwa group of West African languages and they fall into the following cultural divisions – Northern or Onitsha, Southern or Owerri, Western or Ika, Eastern or Cross river or North Eastern or Abakaliki. The Ibo have no traditional migration from elsewhere, nor of conquest of or by other people. They appear to have developed undisturbed in the Eastern region and to have gradually expanded outward from this centre, mainly to the South and East but also Westward across the Niger river into what were formerly Benin and Delta provinces of the Western region.

They have no strong chieftaincies and until the advent of colonial rule the largest unit capable of coherent political action was of local community averaging about 5000 people and consisting of federation of internally autonomous villages. The villages shared common market and meeting place, a common deity and ancestral cults and which supported a tradition of decent from a common founding ancestor or group of ancestors. Eastward there is a tendency for three village groups to expand or to come together to form larger units usually referred to as tribes or clan.
The Igo live patrilocally in compounds or homestead as they call, dispersed in the territory of their village which is primarily composed of a patrilineage or a clan. Apart from North Eastern Ibo they live in rain forest country. Their main food crops are yams, taro and cassava which men and women combine to cultivate. They have a complex organization of markets and of internal and external trade. Their principal exports were originally slaves and later palm oil and kernels. In economic activity barter is followed – just as exchange of vessels, grains and goats. Pottery and jewellery making are also in vogue.

The Northern Ibo were also much noted for their marked plays (man) and for their Ozo and other title societies. They play music on lute. “The Ibo have a well-developed system of migration to temporary employment in other parts of Nigeria. Men and Women are engaged in traditional activities in every business of living”\(^{10}\).

The black wanted to have the best of both the worlds. The black would crave entry into the white structure if he sees immediate benefit in doing so. This is evident in Okankwo’s rejection of his son Obi’s proposal of marriage with Clara, an Osu. As a boy he (Oxonkwo’s son) had rebelled against the inhuman attitude of his father and had become a zealous convert to Christianity. But now, he does not agree to his son’s marriage with an Osu girl even though he
finds all logic against his rejection. So he seeks to hide behind the pretext that even if he agreed the society would not and the future of Obi’s children would become dark since no one in the community would marry them.

The weakness of the narrative is that it does not inform of the religious character of the society in which Obi lives. If they are all Christians, even though converted, their conduct in rejecting the equality of an Osu under the new dispensation is not sustainable – it speaks of the strange hold of the black structures even after adaptation of white values. If on the other hand, Obi alone is a Christian among his clansmen, he should not speak for those who have accepted the Christian values and are the opponents of “the society” he talks of; or he should not talk about his own Christianity and that has failed to literate him from the traditional black structures.

His son is fully aware of the situation and actually reminds him. This is a reflection on the African situation in which the future of its children is dark under both black as well as white structures. It is because of the strong pulls of the culture of which one is the product, against the superficially adopted cultural structures that are alien to one’s temperament and setting. Outside of it, one may survive and flourish after he abandons the old values. However to expect any one to thrive by walking out of his original culture but not its setting creates
situations like these. This seems to be the prime concern of Achebe in his novel.

Colonial consciousness is an important theme in the literature of various countries which suffered the pangs of the colonial rule. The feeling of being subjugated in one’s own country strived the creative imagination of many poets and novelists who expressed their yearnings for freedom from the foreign yoke. In the newly independent countries, the agony was intensified in finding the new native rulers as greedy and corrupt as the old colonial rulers were.

The Ibo people are a large nation of related tribes, sharing a common language, a common belief, traditions and social structure. They inhabit a large forest area of inland south eastern Nigeria between Niger and cross rivers. They are peaceful agriculturists and hard working. Clan relationship was organized in small villages or group of villages. They were organized on democratic and republican lines. They settled everything political by argument and discussion. They were honest, but always drove a hard bargain. They inherited from the father’s side and the creative force of their religions was the (sun) male rather than the (moon) female.

Kate Turkington points out all the strong points and the weakness of the Ibo society which had security and stability in a collective way – dualism, harmonious, culture, music, wisdom and communal ethics. The traditional Ibo
society had an inherent flexibility, but the society was unable to evolve naturally because of its forced and direct confrontation with an alien culture. Though Okankwo is the hero of the novel, Achebe is not so much concerned with his African concept of collection of consciousness rather than the primary western idea of an individual ethics.

The Ibo were not prone to unnecessary grave provocation. It may be seen in the meeting which is held at the market place to discuss the action to be taken for the murder of Udo’s wife, when the crowd gets enraged. They are blood thirsty, but elders of Umnofia decide to go for a peaceful settlement. A peaceful settlement is made to replace the wife of Undo. A virgin is sent to live with him; and Ikemeouena a boy of fifteen is brought as hostage.

African family is patrilineal and patrilocal. Father is the head of the family and polygamy is allowed. The husbands’ mother plays a prominent part. ‘Mother is supreme’ (TFA, 94). In the traditional society mothers are accorded respect. When a man falls into misfortune, as in the case of Okonkwo, he seeks solace at his mother’s place. Also the last rites of a man are performed by his mother’s people. The respect shown to woman is implied in calling a man ‘son of our daughter’ (AOG, 22).

The bride preferred is usually a cousin on mother’s side. Family village or tribe is basically linked with ancestry. Generally in Autumn, when the first
flowering begins the people conduct a ceremony that marks the arrival of their founder ancestor and as a token they sacrifice a sheep or camel. The men of the upper ‘sof’ (half portion of the village) take their wives among the lower ‘sof’ of neighbouring village. “A man does not climb the village hill to seek his wife” is the principle expressed by the Ibo people. The Ibo clan respected personal powers as Achebe has said “Age was respected, but achievement was revered”.

Ibo give considerable weightage to the glories and honours. Okankwo had glorious wrestling and the distinctions he had achieved in several tribal wars brought honour to him. He had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the cat at the age of eighteen. He had already won two titles while his father could not win a single title. This gives way for two inferences: (1) How the Ibo clan has its own way of judging people and (2) The fairness of Achebe in not hiding the drawbacks of his hero either, such as Okankwo’s impatience with his father. Okankwo’s character is developed psychologically. The first chapter in the novel, Things Fall Apart arouses curiosity in the readers about Okankwo, a man of rigid conduct.

Achebe’s description that "Okankwo ruled his household with a heavy hand, his wives especially the youngest lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper and so did his little children may be taken as a statement about the
African male temper. In Ibo society that is largely wild and earthly in its approach, the male is regarded as a symbol of strength at home and outside. But it also encourages him to be arbitrary in his attitudes to the conviction that uphold the male superiority. This is evident in the incident of his wife beating in the week of peace. It is considered an ill-omen for the whole community but no one except Ezdani, the priest of the Earth Goddess condemns him for showing no respect for their gods and ancestors.

Another incident that calls for attention is Okankwo’s killing of Ikemefuna. He has been living with him as a son and has endeared himself to all his hard and talented work. In both cases, the approach is emotional which is a characteristic of agrarian societies. This distinction has continued to dictate the portrayal of the agrarians as opposed to industrial societies. The conduct and reasoning of Okankwo is highly emotional, hot tempered and not disposed to balance reasoning. That is why Okankwo beats his wife for cutting a few leaves of a banana tree and kill Ikemefuna eventhough forewarned of the impending situation by the oldest man Ogbuefi Ezozdu, a great and fearless warrior of his times and highly respected in the whole clan.

In a “transitional society”, the individual, mostly a “black white man” faces the problem of redefining his place in his society. The colonial world in
which they live has,

“disturbed their identity symbols to the extent that they no longer give reliable reference points to locate themselves socially, realize themselves sentimentally and declare themselves, who they are”.

Achebe devotes some attention to the descriptions of the gestures and movements of the marriage party. This has been depicted as a fine “sociological” scene. Here Achebe describes the friendly customs of snuff talking among Ibos. This, and the ensuing scene are presented in terms of dialogues, deliberate gestures and movements, and are therefore fully “realized”. Indeed, scenes like these do not bore or annoy the reader of the superb skill with which Achebe handles them. The incidents are related in such a way that we feel their relevance or their authenticity.

One has to contrast Achebe’s technique with that of an inferior novelist, Flora Nwapa, the author of Efuru to see how skillful he is. Nwapa’s sociological descriptions, which are almost always irrelevant, are often prefaced by some comments like this; “They organized themselves in groups and sang from door to door. Their song went like this…” And then follows an Ibo song or an elaborate recipe for some kind of soup. The introductory comment, ‘their son went like this’ detaches the song or whatever follows from its context, and it
becomes purely sociological information. Achebe’s sociological passages always emerge quite naturally and unobtrusively out of the living situation.

The need for sociological detail to create a sense of society dictates the novel’s construction in his *Things Fall Apart*. The first part may appear sluggish, with a number of apparently irrelevant digressions, while the second moves with astonishing rapidity and is much more unified. This is necessary for Achebe for not concentrating on action in the first part, but on the evocation of Ibo society which requires the description of episodes some of which, like Ezinma’s illness or the trial scene, could even be transported elsewhere without materially damaging the story.

Achebe’s language style generally, is terse unpretentious and concise; but sometimes it glows with radiance and serenity. There has been some discussions about whether the African writer should use standard English or a form of language which more faithfully reflects the culture and status of the people he writes about. Normally Achebe uses standard idiomatic English, but he departs from this norm for Ibo statements or bits of conversations which would look odd in idiomatic English.

In “the sudden flowering of the African literary genius”, however, few women seem to have come to the fore. The African woman in her tribal past has had a career more active than that of man. Indeed, there was no need for
the African woman to reach out for emancipation as her counterparts had to in Europe or the Orient; perhaps in almost all African societies, the woman has a ‘kingdom’ of her own, with both its obligations and its recognition. She frequently has responsibility for cultivating significance and in setting a host of questions concerned with the marriage of young people and the obligations connected with it.

Yet the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries witnessed the steady emasculation of African womanhood. Increasing urbanization deprived the African woman of her ‘power’ in the family circle. In recent decades, however, there has been an increase in the number of educated women in employment. They are now found everywhere facing the lures and hazards of the complex modern society. They have even entered the field of modelling in ‘white’ countries. Elizabeth Tor, a princess from Uganda who was the first woman barrister in East Africa, is now a top fashion model in America and the African woman has entered the field of creative fiction too with the publication of Flora Nwapa’s Efuru.

In Efuru (African Woman’s Writing) the motives are glanced at here and there. But Flora Nwapa is a woman, one of the very first women to take up the challenge of creative writing in English. When a woman starts writing she invites the nation’s womanhood with its unique significance and presents her heroine
as the eternal feminine caught in the web of living with its crisis – crossing sorrows, the frustration and tragedies. Miss Nwapa’s heroine is portrayed with these many things in one – an African ‘every woman’, hard working, patient and long suffering, and symbol of the universal woman who is also the mother of sorrows.

Among Ibo there is a belief in personal God called ‘Chi’. The folk think that one’s Chi is always inclined to consent to one’s wishes (Onyekwe Chi Ya ekwe – says another proverb). Chi is held responsible for an important event in the life of Ibo; There is a belief that a man’s destiny is within his control, for his Chi processes the sole knowledge of destiny.

The novel, ‘Things Fall Apart’ is presented to make everyone acquainted with the way of life of the tribal community. Achebe presents in detail the varied aspects of the Igbo tribal community from the first to the tenth chapters to make it easy for the understanding of the readers. John Povey says:

“With loving and precise detail, Achebe records the customs of traditional tribal ritual. It is to a world rigorously restrictive, yet orderly and secure, that the whitemen came”\(^{12}\).
The tribals have a variety of traditional activities. It is interesting to read about their rituals of welcome and their village festivals. The manner in which a blood feud is settled and the judgement by the marked spirits seem to be a distant correlative of the village panchayats in Indian concept. All these descriptions give us a picture of a society that is well groomed by the people themselves.

In *Arrow of God* though the social life is varied comparatively it does not directly build up the character of Ezeulu. The incidents affect the tribal set up which is eventually destroyed by the self-opinionated Ezeulu. His decision to punish his people, certainly, is not in keeping with the position he holds. His refusal to declare the end of the old year and to announce the beginning of the new year festivities aggravates the condition of the already mangled society. The organic links of the society are broken and the people look forward for some solace. The occasion is very well snatched by the Christians. Ultimately the unity of the village is destroyed and the destruction is total for the tribe.

Thereafter it is a different form of social set up and governance. A reader witnesses the effect of this in *No Longer at Ease*: the disintegration and degradation and ultimately the death of those supreme values of the traditional Igbo tribal community life. Against Mr. Green’s ideal of duty, Achebe portrays the mindset of Umofians in Lagos. Their utmost priority is to help a fellow
Umuofian. The reader can commend this appreciable quality of the people in reaching out to help the other as there is the continuance of the tribal solidarity even in city life. But on the negative side this gives the chance to corruption in society. As David Carroll observes:

“Tribal solidarity when transferred from the country to the town becomes nepotism and self interest”¹³.

Achebe is an intellectual whose chief debt is not to any African writer but to such English novelists as George Eliot and Joseph Conrad. Achebe actively involved on Biafra’s side in Nigerian civil war. His Things Fall Apart is a tragic moving story of Okankwo. Achebe is detached and cool but more penetrative of the nature of both Nigerians and Christian missionaries than any previous African writer. No Longer At Ease is about Okankwo’s grandson Obi’s corrupt practices. Arrow of God is about a chief priest who comes to trust an ignorant and essentially cruel English District Officer. A Man of the People is more satirical and comic and is not so effective as his previous novels.

The language of Achebe’s novels works consistently as a mode of revelation of characters as each of the chief characters matures in relationship with the people. The language of the novel formally enacts the erasure of colonial attitude and values. The first two chapters in “Ant hills of the Savannah” are presented in standard English with proverbs being used by
Professor Okong to evoke a tribal identity. Sam, His Excellency who does not relish the use of proverbs says to cut them out. The Professor says,

“But today’s incident has shown that a man must not swallow his cough because I am blind to all the hanky – panky that is going on. It is because I have always believed in the old adage to paddle my own canoe”.

(Anthills of the Savannah, p.19).

The author is critical of both types of people, those affecting tribal discourse and those who are westernized. In the later chapters not only proverbs but also pidgin is used by all the characters – Chris, Beatrice, Emmanuel and Captain Abdul. The use of proverbs and pidgin as normal discourse characterize desalination and a repudiation of the artificial distance set up by the colonizer between the ruler and the ruled.

The novel No Longer at Ease… is a refutation of all the tribes. Achebe has chosen to be consciously didactic. As he wrote in an essay, “The novelist as a Teacher”, about a boy who put writer instead of ‘harmattan’ into a school paper on Nigeria.

“I think it is part of my business as a writer to teach that boy that there is nothing disgraceful about the African weather nor is there anything disgraceful about the African past or African personality.”

14
The most fascinating, delightful and proud sport among the Ibo was wrestling. Such a wrestling match has been colourfully depicted by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*. At the commencement of the match the drums were beaten. Two teams were arranged facing each other. Two judges walked around the wrestlers and when they thought they were equally matched, stopped them. Five matches ended in this way. The last match was between the leaders of the team. They were the best wrestlers in all the nine villages. It was between Okafo and Izezue. It was a fierce contest. The wrestlers were in each others grip. It looked like an equal match.

The two judges were already moving forward to separate them when Ikezue, now desperate, went down quickly on one knee in an attempt to fling his man backwards over his head. It was a sad miscalculation. Quick as the lightning of Amadiora, Okato raised his right leg and swung it over his rival’s head. The crowd burst into a thunderous roar. Okato was swept off his feet by his supporters and carried home shoulder high.

The crowd sang Okatos’ praise and the young women clapped their hands:

“Who will wrestle for our village?

Okato will wrestle for our village.”
Has he thrown a hundred men?
He has thrown four hundred men.

...........
Then send him word to fight for us"15.

The critics may dismiss passages like this as nothing but sociological information, but for a sensitive reader it surely evokes the feel of life in Ibo land before the advent of the whiteman. One can feel not just the excitement and the physical movement of the wrestling but the very rhythms of life in the pounding of drums and the resilience of the prose.

The music of Africa has strongly influenced the music of Europe and America. It began when Negroes were brought to America as slaves, taking their songs and dances with them. Gradually, as they became accustomed to their new home, they combined their own music with the folk music and American Indian Music they heard in the new world. The result was a new and original American folk music. Largely out of this grew ‘Jazz’, one of the most popular forms of music today.

African music is considered primitive because it comes from people who do not have a written language; songs are passed on by word of mouth rather than by the use of written notes. Yet it does not seem right to call this music primitive, since some of it is more highly developed than the folk music of
Europe and America. To the American Negroes, music is a vital part of everyday life and experience. It means much more to them than merely listening pleasure. It is primarily associated with religious and ceremonial life. Besides ceremonial and prayer songs, there are songs appropriate only for the important events in a person’s life. Songs of birth, songs of coming of age, songs for marriage, songs for death, songs for curing the sick, for bringing rain, for religious occasions and so on.

In contrast to the people of our western societies, everyone plays an active part in the musical life of the tribe. In a typical tribe of Nigeria, for instance, it is taken for granted that every member has musical talent. Despite the fact that there are some professional musicians who are paid for their special skill, most members of a typical African society know and can sing their music as a matter of course. Music is intimately tied to the things that are most important to the welfare of the tribe. For example, to the Watusi tribe of Rwanda, cattle are extremely important because they are tribe’s chief source of food. Therefore cattle is a popular subject for a wide variety of songs.

There are ceremonial songs about cattle, flute pieces, that keep cattle away at night, children’s songs, cow songs and songs that tell of historical events in which the cattle have taken part. There are work songs to sing while the cow-herd prepares to take cattle home in the evening; others to sing during
the journey home, still others sing while the herd draws water. This shows that there are many kinds of songs connected with the tribal life.

The west coast Africans have developed the art of drum playing on a very high level of skill. They can perform rhythmic feats on their drums which are truly amazing. The melodies are not like ours. They can be changed and repeated often. Such music is played by two separate groups. Sometimes one person in a chorus will make up his own version of the melody and as he goes along others continue their own way.

Mostly musical instruments are drums. Some are small enough to be hung from the player's neck or shoulders. When drum sticks are not used, the Africans beat the drums with their hands and fingers. They have developed a highly sensitive technique so that the different fingers can make the drum give out a variety of sounds, and the various parts of the drum make different kinds of noises. Drums are played singly or in groups of two to five.

Perhaps the most characteristic African instrument, which is not found in any other continent is the ‘Sansa’ or ‘Mbira’, sometimes called the Thumb-Piano. It consists of wooden board or box over which several tongues of metal or bamboo are tied. Each of these tongues is plucked gently, making a buzzing or tinkling sound. There are eight to twenty such tongues on the ‘Sansa’. Often a
large gourd is tied under the Sansa to make it more resonant, or in groups, or with other types of instruments. It is also used to accompany singing.

Stringed instruments are of many kinds. Most of them are plucked rather than bowed. Some are tall like harps with many strings. Others are simple like the musical instrument of now-a-days which has only one string that is plucked or struck with a small stick. The most common wind instruments are flute, the horns made from animals' horns or of wood, and the panpipes. But it is the rattles and the bells that receive the widest use and that are so essential to the great rhythmic vitality of the music. Although they do not have the Orchestra, as we do, Africans do have something very much like chamber music. For example, a harp, a sansa and a rattle may be played together in a piece; or a bell, horns and a chorus or a group of three xylophones may form an ensemble.

Musical instruments are also used for purposes other than music making in some tribes. They are sometimes used to signal information to far away places. Since instruments usually can be heard even at greater distances than shouting or singing, some tribes have made up codes based on the melodic movement of speech. Many African languages are called tone languages because the pitch, high or low, on which one speaks a word or a syllable determines the meaning of the word. In the signalling codes the melodic pitches of a word are often played on a slit drum made from a hollowed log pounded
with a stick and people far away can understand what the drum says. In Liberia, xylophones are sometimes used in this way to signal messages. Arab’s style and musical instruments have influenced the parts of Chad, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan. They use variety of drums, harps, horns, flutes, pipes, lyres, zithers and xylophones.

In spite of the different languages they use, families were represented by the large number of tribes, more than two thousand. The music of this huge area is fundamentally homogeneous. Its chief characteristics are:

1. Spontaneous creation while the time and words of a song or the drumming for a dance will keep within the traditional pattern of melody or rhythm. They are not crystalized in a standard form but are modified at each rendering by the creative genius of the performers. This modification is not an embellishment but a fundamental principle of the system which may be defined as “free creation around the traditional frame work.

2. A melody tied to rise and fall of speech in the “local” languages where the meaning of the words depends on the pitch at which each syllable is spoken.

3. Limited harmonic development
4. Exceedingly complex rhythmic structures. The principle of rhythm in drumming is different.

In practice three drums beat at a time with different metres. African music is a complex interweaving of melodic and rhythmic pattern and the inherent accents are in constant state of tension. Different kinds of music are associated with life cycle, birth, marriage, death etc. Music plays a significant part in African life which is vital both to society and to the individual. Much depends on traditional practice.

In the Ibo society first wife of a man commanded great respect than the remaining wives. Polygamy is a common feature among them. There is school of social anthropologists who rhapsodize over traditional African society seeing it as a welcome antidote to the materialism and commercial technology of the western society, with its morbid pre-occupation with worldly possessions, status symbols, rapid promotion and all the trappings of the rat-race. Such anthropologists are likely to have second thoughts an reading Things Fall Apart for this society is just as competitive, materialistic and concerned with status as any to be found in the Western World. Only in his Things Fall Apart do we get a lot of information about the tribal living, music and culture of the Africans.
This is a society in which a man's prestige is indirect proportion to the number of Yams he has in his back, the number of huts he has in his compound, the number of his wives and children, the 'titles' he has taken and the number of human heads he has to his credit. Indeed the struggle for the acquisition of titles is the equivalent of modern technological society's rat-race and like the latter it can be an expensive, soul-destroying process in which the weak and the introverted are easily left behind. Modern technological societies (e.g. the United States of America) evaluate a man according to his own achievement rather than his ancestry.

The apparent prosperity of Ibo society is overshadowed by the ever brooding presence of danger, fear and death. There was the fear of evil and capricious gods and magic and fear of the forest and "of the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw". It is fear, especially the fear of the gods of evil, that motivates the acts of apparent brutality in this community. Umuofia society reacts with tremendous speed and ruthlessness to expect from its midst anything which it considers a threat to its security or which might bring down on its head the wrath of the gods.

Twins are taken from their parents and abandoned alive in the evil forest. 'Obanjes' (wicked children who, when they die, enter their mother's wombs to be born again, only to die again) are mutilated at their death, dragged by the
ankle on the ground and buried in the evil forest. Those who suffer from the swelling sickness, an abomination to the Earth goddess, are not allowed to die in the village, but are taken to the evil forest, tied to trees and abandoned to die and be devoured by birds of prey.

Suicides are also an abomination to the Earth goddess and are buried like dogs in the evil forest. ‘Osus’, who are consecrated to the service of the gods, are denied all contact with other human beings and at death are buried by their relatives in the evil forest. The most injunction of the gods are obeyed without question, whether it be the execution of an innocent boy, the virtual abduction of a mother’s only child or the expulsion of a man from his father’s land for the accidental shooting of his kinsman.

Achebe does not merely record these instances of savagery, without implying any judgement, for he carefully leaves clues and hints, structural as well as textual, as comments on the nature of the society he describes.

A fact that is likely to catch the reader’s attention is that most of those Igbo writers in English actually use the word ‘Chi’ or its English interpretation several times in their novels. In these situations where the word ‘Chi’ is used, it is given meanings that could equate to fate, luck, god, guardian, creator and companion. The suggestion is unmistakable in all these situations that one’s fortunes are dependent on ‘Chi’. Very often it is material fortune, or prosperity,
that is involved. As these characters struggle for good farm yields, possession of children, good health, happiness and material contentment their graph of life reveals an irregular fluctuation. It appears as if life is a continued attempt to pull oneself out of one kind of misfortune or another.

There is of tethered impression to some strangling hold from which man struggles vainly to free himself. In this struggle through life, Igbo value system, used as the store house of what one might describe as “the tragic activities” are the result of human factors, economic, religious, sociological, political – which man grapples within his march through history. Ultimately tragedy becomes easily recognizable when these ‘tragedy activities’ relate to the values of the Igbo world.

In his article “The Tragic conflict in Achebe’s Novels”, Abiola Irele concludes that Achebe’s No Longer At Ease is a failure as a tragedy as the chief character in the novel does not have the stature of a tragic figure. One agrees that Obi-Okanwo does not cut a tragic figure, but the Igbo sense of tragedy in the novel is to be sought in other directions. It is to be found, for instance, in the fact that a young man does not attend his mother’s burial ceremony on the flimsy ground that he is broken.

This is a fact that many an Igbo reader is likely to lament. It would only be one out of the many reasons to warrant the condemnation of Obi as a man
of education whose exposure to an alien culture prevents from realizing that he has to root his feet on the earth; to approach the folk of his village on equal terms without condescension, before he can merit man’s sympathy. Obi’s ‘Chi’ is bad for it is destined to ensure that Obi arrives at a kind of nemesis. But his fate is relevant to the society against which the rootlessness of his identity is to be measured. His story will ever remain that sad story of a young man who, because of the new scheme of things, no longer understands his people.

The best known African folk tale is the animal trickster story. In Bantu Africa (East, Central and South Africa) and the Western Sudan, the trickster is the hare; in West Africa the spider (Ghana, Liberia, Sieria, Leone) or the tortoise (Ibo, Bonin, Yoraba). The Yoruba consciously poke fun at their own fault when they tell stories of Tortoise trickster, sometimes tortoise’s cunning defeats itself as, for example, in the delightful tale in which the tortoise steals from the gods, a Calabash that contains all the wisdom of the world. He hangs it round his neck and is so eager to get the hare with it.

When he comes to a tree trunk lying across the road, he is unable to cross it because the Calabash obstructs his way and in his anxiety he fails to put it on his back again. Frustrated tortoise smashes the Calabash; and so ever since that day, wisdom has been scattered all over the world. Stories which are told for entertainment, usually are on moonlit nights. They are called ‘dilemma’
tales in which the audience are invited to supply the ending solution. Dilemma tale of wolf is described in the following manner:

Three brothers married to the same girl journey to a strange land. They sleep with her in turn. When she slept with the first brother, some robbers murdered her. The brother was condemned to death on suspicion. The second brother offered to die in his place. At the moment of execution, the third brother came forward with the confession that he was the actual murderer. At the same time, the eldest brother arrived there and he was ready to embrace his fate. Which of the brother is the most noble. (The listeners are asked to answer).

The Ibo people love folk stories. They distinguish the stories as masculine stories and feminine stories. There are instances of these kind of stories in Things Fall Apart. Okankwo wanted his sun Nwoye to grow into a tough young man capable of ruling his father’s household when he was dead and gone to join the ancestors. He wanted him to be a prosperous man, having enough in barn to feed the ancestors with regular sacrifices. He was always happy when he heard him grumbling about women. That showed that some time he would be unable to control his womenfolk. No matter how prosperous a
man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children (especially his women) he was not really a man.

African ethnic groups have their own languages or dialect. More than 800 languages are spoken in Africa. Languages are Arabic, Swahilli and Hausa are widely spoken. The language spoken in Africa can be classified into three broad groups. 1. Black African languages 2. Afro-Asian languages and 3. Indo-European languages. Black African languages are spoken by nearly 290 million people. They live in south of Sahara and Southern Sudan. The languages can be grouped into three major families. 1. Niger Kordofanian 2. Nilo-Saharan and 3. Khoisan. The Niger Kordofanian family is by far the largest of the Black African language families. It includes about 300 Bantu languages spoken in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa.

The term ‘Bantu’ refers to both the various languages and groups of people who speak them. Swahilli is the most widely spoken Bantu language. Among other important Bantu languages are Ganda Kikuyu, Kongo, Rundi, Sothi and Zulu. The Niger Kordofanian family also includes many non-Bantu languages spoken mainly in Western Africa.

“These languages include Akaw, Igbo or Ibo and Yourba. Nilo-sharan languages are used by about 35 million people who live in
Chad, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Major languages in this family include Dinak, Kanuri, Masai and Nuer\textsuperscript{16}.

About 100,000 people including the San and Khiskhoin of South Western Africa speak Khoisan languages. Two small groups in Tanzania also speak these languages. Khoisan languages are called cliek languages as they are expressed with unusual ‘Cliek’ sound. They are unrelated to any other African languages. Afro-Asian languages are spoken throughout the Northern half of Africa. This mainly includes Arabic and Berber. The other Afro-Asian languages include Amtaric, Galla, Hausa and Somali.

“Indo-European languages are widely spoken in Southern Africa. This was developed by Dutch settlers. Nearly three million people speak English. A large number of educated Africans speak English, French or Portuguese in addition to other languages. The people of Madagaskar speak Malassy. Most of them know English also”\textsuperscript{17}.

Nearly 200 million Africans practise local traditional religion. Local religions have many features in common. They explain how the Universe was created and teach what is right and wrong. They define the relationship between human beings and Nature and between the young and the old. They
give reasons for human sufferings and instruct people as to how to lead good and contented life and avoid misfortune.

African religions recognize the existence of Supreme God. They seek help with lesser gods of the spirit of the dead ancestors. They pray after sacrifice to gods to gain such things as good health or fertility of land. African religions include Dogon of Mali, the Yoruba of Nigeria and Ashanti of Ghana.

Most of the Africans raise live-stock or grow crops. Thousands of Africans live in rural parts and have no lands of their own to work. Small groups of nomads called Bedouins tend camels, goats and sheep.

“Husbands are the providers and wives raise the children and take care of the household. Children are expected to look after their aged parents. They make weekly trips to market place. Many Africans live in houses built of Sun-dried mud with roof of straw, grass or leaves. Modern methods of agricultural is followed in many parts of the continent”\(^{18}\).

Most of the African families grow food crops for their own use. In wet areas, they grow bananas, plantains, raise roots as Yams and Cassara. Recently they have introduced cash crops such as Coffee, Cocoa, beans, cotton, coconuts and fruits; both men and women work in the field.
Polygamy, the right of a man to have more than one wife is in force. They have to give dowry, goats, household goods or money to the bridegroom at the time of marriages. The traditional role of (African) woman is to remain at home and take care of the family.

Strong feelings of loyalty and co-operation bring African families closely together. The family helps its members with business concerns, employment, legal and various matters. Africans still seek the advice and approval of their relatives before taking any important decisions:

“Marriage is more than an agreement between a man and a wananchi to live together. It is also a means to acquire more relatives and children. The bride and the groom should consent to the marriage. The man or his father or his uncle must give a bride wealth in money or in kind. This practice, they consider is a way to show her importance and the value they place upon the new ties with her relatives.”

Achebe in his role as a story teller and literacy chronicler, records faithfully those customs which violated the value of life, with an eye towards teaching his countrymen not to descend these vile practices again.
For Achebe, the artist is a recorder of his people’s history and by doing so, he is able to cast light on his society’s part and is able to assist his society to better understandings of their present and future. Achebe wishes to assert the strength of their people’s past and to demonstrate, most of all, that the people were not living in darkness and primitivism when the European invaders arrived to put a knife in their society and split it apart.

But the task of recording history and interpreting it for one’s fellow participants is not an easy one. Achebe adheres further to the constraints of the story tellers by giving the distinct impression in his novel that the story he is recording has been brought down to him by other story tellers of the collective soul of their people. In this regard, because he is quite young at the time of the telling of his tale, he humbly accepted the awesome position which they hold.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


3. Ibid., p.25.

4. Ibid., p.20.

5. Loc.cit.


8. Ibid., p.11


18. Ibid., p.124.

19. Ibid., p.131.